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HEADLINE: Getty's ReFlow, at take-off point, to seek funding

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NEW YORK, June 22 (Reuters) - Billionaire oil heir Gordon Getty's novel concept for providing mutual funds with cash to meet unexpected investor redemptions is about to face a major hurdle of market approval.

ReFlow Management Co., a company started with funds from a Getty trust, will seek up to \$250 million in a private placement in September. The San Francisco-based company hopes the funding will fuel growth beyond clients related to Forward Funds, a fund complex with ties to Getty.

After almost two years in which mutual funds were consumed by regulatory probes into improper trading, the company feels the industry is back to the business of boosting returns and preserving capital, an environment that favors ReFlow.

"The time is ripe for us," said Alan Seigerman, a ReFlow managing director.

ReFlow, which allows fund managers to access cash without unloading shares they'd rather hold on to, has completed more than 600 transactions with Forward Funds, providing it ample data for prospective clients to review.

Trading costs mutual funds about 1.4 percent of their assets under management every year, and the savings ReFlow offers can be substantial, Seigerman said. ReFlow charges a service fee that is a minimal 15 basis points of the assets involved in a transaction. Savings have averaged about 88 basis points over the past two years, he said.

"ReFlow is focused on the trades that you don't want to do, or don't necessarily need to do, and that represents about one-third of the trades, but can be upwards of 40 percent to 50 percent of the costs," he said.

ReFlow will buy up to 3 percent of a mutual fund's shares, and sell them back within 28 days to help asset managers hit with sudden redemptions. The sell and buy orders are triggered at the fund company's discretion, and ReFlow also is obliged to provide cash and return shares at the client's discretion.

ReFlow plans to soon launch its service in Luxembourg, and has four lead U.S. and European prospects, representing more than 60 funds that have almost \$26 billion in assets under management, he said.

"These are just companies that have expressed strong interest," he said, adding that ReFlow has held talks with about 30 firms.

Scott B. Dubchansky, chairman, president and principal executive officer of Metropolitan West Capital Management LLC of Los Angeles, said ReFlow is an interesting idea that offers portfolio managers the flexibility they might not otherwise have.

"A product that helps to flatten out the ins and outs of capital flows in the mutual fund world is a potentially valuable tool towards benefiting shareholder value," he said.

Metropolitan West, which manages about \$14 billion in assets, including mutual funds, has signed up for ReFlow, but hasn't used it as its funds are highly liquid, he said.

Some asset classes, such as high-yield bonds or some emerging market securities, are expensive or illiquid to trade and that's where ReFlow can step in, Seigerman said.

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